



## **Academic achievement of underprivileged society scheduled castes and scheduled tribes**

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### **Abstract**

The general term underprivileged society is applied to a large number of social groups, in fact to a majority of the human race. It is used to refer to ethnic, religious, cultural, social, political and been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of a been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of a economic groups. It is employed with reference to small minorities, regional linguistic groups, and even to nations as a whole. The same term is used to denote both primitive tribal communities which have remained isolated from the mainstream of modern civilization and communities which have been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of a powerful adversary from within or outside their society. There is a need to know about the educational status and academic achievement of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It was found that majority of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people are illiterates and among the literates, majority has minimal educational attainment. It was further found that throughout all the three generations of the scheduled castes, illiteracy is high. Among the fourth generation of scheduled castes it was observed that now their educational standards have been upgraded and they are able to acquire better positions in the society along with the others. Many underprivileged learners have the capability but situations and lack of facilities made them the weaker personalities in the society.

**Keywords:** academic achievement, underprivileged society, SC and ST

### **Introduction**

The general term underprivileged society is applied to a large number of social groups, in fact to a majority of the human race. It is used to refer to ethnic, religious, cultural, social, political and been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of a been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of an economic groups. It is employed with reference to small minorities, regional linguistic groups, and even to nations as a whole. The same term is used to denote both primitive tribal communities which have remained isolated from the mainstream of modern civilization and communities which have been forcefully deprived of their heritage by the actions of a powerful adversary from within or outside their society.

Obviously any term which is used in so many different ways and to refer to so many different social situations loses something of its value as a concept for social scientists. This does not imply that any of the usages are wrong, only that a further classification is required for purposes of precision. This becomes of the utmost importance when the objective is to evolve strategies and recommend programmes to improve the social conditions of these people. Therefore we propose to examine this concept in detail, to categorize and subdivide the various groups falling under this broad heading to distinguish those whose condition arise from different causes and whose upliftment can be only brought about by different remedies.

### **Scheduled castes**

According to Dr. D.N. Majumdar the term 'Scheduled Castes' refers to the 'Untouchable Castes'. "The untouchable castes are those who suffer from various social and political disabilities many of which are traditionally prescribed and socially enforced by higher castes".

The term schedule caste was coined by the Simon commission in 1935 which came to be used for the people described as untouchables. According to Ambedkar, in early India, they were known as 'broken men' or 'outcastes'. The British described them as 'depressed classes'. In 1931 census, they were classified as 'exterior castes'. Mahatma Gandhi designated these classes as 'Harijans' –the children of God. The educated persons among the untouchable castes did not take to this nomenclature kindly as they thought that to single them out as the children of God merely means that attempts were being made to make their conditions tolerable rather than destroy the system which breed inequality (Roy Burman 1977-82). The framers of the Indian constitution also adopted the term coined by the Simon Commission.

### **Scheduled tribes**

The term 'Tribe' is nowhere defined in the constitution and, in-fact, there is no satisfactory definition for the same. 'To the ordinary man the word 'tribe' suggests simple folk living in hills and forests; to people who are a little better and songs; to an administrator it means a group or citizens whose welfare is the special responsibility of the president of India, to an anthropologist it indicates a special field for study of a social phenomena'.

The second largest group of the 'Submerged Humanity'. Gandhiji called them 'Girijans'. The constitution of India has referred to them as the as the 'Scheduled backward classes of the underprivileged section consists 7.42 crores of Schedule tribes who constitute 8.8 of the total population. The scheduled tribes generally called tribal people. Survived with their unchanging ways of life for centuries. The tribal people were the earliest among the present inhabitants of India. They live in the forest areas, hilly regions,

mountainous places and deep valleys. Dr. Das and Das have referred them as Tribes’.

Article 46 of the Indian Constitution lays down a directive principle of state policy. It provides ‘The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the people and in particular of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation. Scheduled Tribes are those tribes who enjoy the various special provisions under the various articles of the Indian Constitution and whose name appears in the schedule of the Indian Constitution.

### **Scheduled Castes**

Education is considered as the most powerful instrument of social change and development and means of reducing inequality in the society. It helps the individual to raise its social status in various ways. It acts as a catalyst in improvement in many other aspects of life. The role of education as an investment in human resources has been increasingly recognized in all countries. But in a caste ridden and hierarchical society like India’s access to educational opportunities is unequal and unjust. However, after the independence the ‘Directives principles of state policy’ enables the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class of citizens. Articles 15(4), 29, 30, 45-46 and 350-A are the relevant provisions in the constitution pertaining to educational development of the people. Education has a special significance particularly for the weaker sections of the society. Since independence, the Government is making serious efforts to promote literacy among the scheduled castes by providing free education, awarding scholarships, reservation of seats and granting loans. In spite of all these privileges, their literacy has not improved satisfactorily. They have to go a long way to come up in the field of educational development. The Scheduled Caste throughout the country occupies the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy. The Scheduled Castes include several Castes in the Hindu Society. As per Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes order act 1976. Assam has sixteen castes categorized as Scheduled castes. Initially they were known as depressed class of the society. But according to the constitutional provision, from the year 1950, sixteen castes have been known as Scheduled Castes in Assam. They are Bansphor, Bhuinmali or Mali, BrittalBania, Dhubi, Dugala, Hira, Jhalo-Malo, jalkoot, Kaibarta, Lalbegi, Mahara, Mehtar or Bhang, Muchi, Namasudra, Patris and Sutradhar. Lack of education and its facilities is also one of the socio-economic cause of the backward communities specially Scheduled Caste people.

### **Rationale**

The terms ‘Scheduled Caste’ and ‘Scheduled Tribe’ are only legal fictions and Constitutional myth. Nowhere, in the Indian Constitution are they defined even though it is the lengthiest legal document of nations in contemporary world. This has actually led to confusion and with the result the Constitution is amended rather frequently. The Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) wherever they live, are faced with many diverse problems, which are of social, economical, political and educational in nature. It is common knowledge how the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes suffer from times immemorial for no fault of theirs. The SC’s and ST’s, throughout the country occupy

the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy. In a hierarchy of unequal relationships, the SC’s and ST’s are at the bottom and hence socially inferior to all others in the community. There is a need to know the educational status and academic achievement of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Further, among themselves also there is further stratification and ranking. After independence, the Government of India has taken number of steps to strengthen the educational base of the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

### **Objectives**

- To study the research papers related to Educational status and academic achievement of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- To review the available literature related to Educational status and academic achievement of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

### **Review of literature**

Mitra and Singh (2008) <sup>[14]</sup> assessed that the tribal children often enroll in primary education and then drop-out of school in order to help family. Female dropout rate is high among tribal communities as they are expected to help out family in household chores. They also identified the discrepancy existing in female literacy level of tribes in India using census data. The reasons for the low tribal women literacy rates were also analysed by the researcher with the help of existing literature. Poverty is identified as the core variable leading to low literacy achievement, low gross enrollment ratio and high dropout rate of Scheduled Tribes. The work lack empirical evidence to prove reasons for the underlying problem.

Debi and Mahesh (2009) examined the educational status of tribal’s in Orissa and also makes an attempt to study the role of The Panchayat’s Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996 in the development of education of the tribal’s. The study analyses the results using (i) Sopher’s disparity Index, (ii) Co-efficient of Equality and (ii) Gender parity index. The analysis of the results mainly concentrates to two groups of districts i.e (i) Scheduled districts (more than 50 % tribal population) and (ii) Non-Scheduled districts (Less than 50% tribal Population). The main findings of the study are: (a) the literacy rate of male, female and total population of scheduled tribes in the scheduled districts is lower than the non scheduled districts with an exception to one of the scheduled districts (Sundergarh). The tribal female literacy rate was found to be as low as 7.5 percent in Malkangiri district (scheduled district), which is really a matter of serious concern; (b) about 27 percent of the habitations with predominantly scheduled tribe population did not have a primary school within a radius of one kilometer; (c) the gender parity index indicates that it is the lowest in the Scheduled Districts and highest in non-scheduled districts. The survival rate (47 percent) of ST children is found to be the lowest when they reach class-V while the same is 65 percent among others; (d) the percentage of tribal teachers is only 8.4 percent in the state and only 16 percent in tribal dominate areas, which are considered to be below the prescribed norm (e) the PESA Act of 1996 after more than a decade does not seem to empower the tribal’s to realise their basic rights particularly in respect of education, health etc. Mohanty (2009) <sup>[15]</sup> studied social correlates of academic achievement of rural underprivileged primary school girls

and found that socio economic status was a potential social correlate of academic achievement; home environment had positive correlation with academic achievement in case of low achievers only; school environment failed to establish any relationship with the achievement level of high and low achievers.

Mohanty (2009) <sup>[15]</sup> attempted to examine the social factors that play significant role in academic achievement. The study was carried among 210 rural scheduled caste primary school girls in four DPEP districts of Haryana. The results revealed that socio-economic status is found to be potential social correlate of academic achievement. Home environment is having positive correlation with academic achievement in case of low achievers only and school environment failed to prove any relationship with the achievement level of high and low achievers.

Davis and Sunitha (2009) <sup>[24]</sup> found that the ST population stands far behind the general population in literacy rates, average years of schooling, retention rates and pass percentage at higher secondary exam levels in Kerala. The percentage point of difference on average years of schooling is high (i.e., more than 50 percent) in the tribal concentrated districts. The study identifies the dialect used by the community coupled with economic backwardness and socio-cultural reasons as barriers to enrolment at schools.

Saini and Monika (2010) conducted a study entitled as "A study of academic achievement of scheduled caste secondary school students in relation to study habits, home environment and school environment". The scheduled caste which are treated as untouchables continue to remain at the bottom of India's caste hierarchy. They also remain at the bottom of economic hierarchy, having no land of their own and relegated to undertake only menial/dirty and ill paid jobs. The major causes that have kept the scheduled caste down in the society have been poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and fear and resultant inability to assert themselves. It is their disadvantageous environment which has pushed them for below, as regards academic achievement, study habits and concerned.

Lal *et al.* (2010) studied emotional intelligence of scheduled caste students in relation to academic achievement with the objective to study relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of male and female students of arts and science stream by taking a sample of 300 students from Meerut region through cluster random sampling technique and found that the male scheduled caste students having high emotional intelligence and academically superior to their counterpart; there was significant difference between mean achievement scores of male scheduled caste students of arts and science stream having high and low emotional intelligence; there was no significant difference between mean achievement scores of female scheduled caste students of arts stream having high and low emotional intelligence.

Pradhan and Kumar (2011) described that despite special initiatives like Ashram schools, introducing vernacular at primary level, and teaching in local dialects, the tribals are still lagging behind the non-tribals. Under such circumstances, the government and policy makers should put best efforts to improve their educational status.

Rajam and Malarvizhi (2011) <sup>[21]</sup> conducted a survey in Indian context and found that: (a) to study the formal level of education and achievement among the Tribal

group; (b) to study the parental objective in educating the children; (c) to find out the reasons for taking education; (d) to find out the knowledge about the reservation of seats for Scheduled Caste and financial aid for children; and (e) to assess the difficulties faced by them. The study made use of sample of 600 girls in the Nilgris selected by adopting purposive random sampling technique. The study concluded that though the educational opportunities are adequate in Nilgris, the given opportunities for education were not utilized fully; sometimes they were opposed by their own caste people, which resulted in conflicts, problems and tensions. The study suggested that, Massive community programme could be taken with a view to change the aspiration levels of the disadvantaged children and a crèche attached to the school may lighten the domestic burden of school girls.

George (2011) carried out a study on higher education in India from the angle of exclusion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes. The study gives a detailed note on enrolment at higher education from social group perspective and explains reasons for exclusion of SCs/STs. The researcher also tried to find out the reasons for lower educational attainment of these groups.

Rami (2012) discussed the status of primary education in the tribal district of Dang in Gujarat. In the district, there are about 412 primary schools; out of which 378 primary schools are run by the district panchayat. The paper concludes that most of the schools have buildings, but they fail to attract the girl students owing to lack of other essential amenities like drinking water as well as separate toilets for boys and girls. The common toilet facility has prevented many tribal girls from enrolling beyond 5<sup>th</sup> standard. Hence, the drop out ratio goes higher among the tribal girls. Another problem that makes tribal students leave schools is the medium of instruction which is quite different from their own vernacular dialect.

Kartigeyan and Nirmala (2012) <sup>[13]</sup> analyzed the gender influence on academic achievement in English. The study revealed that the girls had a higher mean score compared to the boys in their academic achievement in English. From the community wise analysis it is found that girls showed better performance except in scheduled tribe community.

Varghese and Nagaraj (2013) <sup>[29]</sup> investigated tribal children's backwardness in English language and to find out causes thereof. The study was conducted in one of the most educationally backward tribal pocket of Palakkad District, Kerala. The lack of proficiency in English language is identified as a major obstacle to the education of Schedule Tribe learners. The inappropriate syllabus and teaching method of English develops a negative attitude in learners towards learning. The fear of learning a foreign language is one of the factors to stop their education because English language is a criteria rather than an option at higher level. It is clear that tribal learners are not motivated well. They have adjustment problems with school curriculum and teaching of English language. Though the Government can provide grants and scholarships.

### Findings of the study

- Poverty is identified as the core variable leading to low literacy achievement, low gross enrollment ratio and high dropout rate of scheduled tribes. Mitra and Singh (2008) <sup>[14]</sup>

- The literacy rate of male, female and total population of scheduled tribes in the scheduled districts is lower than the non scheduled districts. Debi and Mahesh (2009)
- It was revealed that socio-economic status is found to be potential social correlate of academic achievement. Mohanty (2009) <sup>[15]</sup>
- It was found that the ST population stands far behind the general population in literacy rates, economic backwardness and socio-cultural reasons as barriers to enrolment at schools. Davis and Sunitha (2009) <sup>[24]</sup>
- The study revealed that poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and fear kept the scheduled caste down in the society. Saini and Monika (2010)
- The study indicated that the government and policy makers should put best efforts to improve the educational status of tribal's. Pradhan and Kumar (2011)
- Massive community programmes could be taken with aspiration levels of the disadvantaged children. Rajam and Malarvizhi (2011) <sup>[21]</sup>
- It was found from the community wise analysis that the girls showed higher mean score as compared to the boys in their academic achievement in English. Kartigeyan and Nirmala (2012) <sup>[13]</sup>
- The study revealed that the lack of proficiency in English language is identified as a major obstacle to the education of scheduled tribe learner's. Due to inappropriate syllabus and teaching method of English develops a negative attitude in learners towards learning. It is clear that tribal learners are not motivated well. They have adjustment problems with school curriculum and teachings of English language. Though the Government can provide grants and scholarships. Varghese and Nagaraj (2013) <sup>[29]</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

Education is the key to scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) development. These children have very low levels of participation. Though the development of the scheduled caste's and scheduled tribes has been rather slow. If government will not take some drastic steps for the development of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe education, the status of education among these will be a story of distress, despair and death. The constitutional provisions for educational development for scheduled castes literacy, special facilities for educational advancement of the Scheduled castes in higher education, educational inequalities, and reservation for scheduled castes in educational development and social integration. State intervention is important for STs and SCs for their improvement in social, economic and educational conditions.

It is identified that majority of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people are illiterates and among the literates, majority have minimal educational attainment. It is further found that that throughout all the three generations of the scheduled castes, illiteracy is high. However, the illiteracy over generations has come down, more so in case of fourth generation, in the children of the respondents. Among the scheduled castes it is observed that now their educational standards have been upgraded and they are able to acquire better positions in the society along with the others. Still there is a need and scope for improvement in socio-economic conditions of this group because all the castes and

all the people belonging to scheduled castes are not incorporated in the mainstream of higher education. Educating the tribal children and empowering them is a challenge in our society. Underprivileged learners must be treated well by the society, surroundings and mainly the teachers. Many underprivileged learners have the capability but situations and lack of facilities made them the weaker personalities in the society.

Hence, time has come to think seriously about the education of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. So, there is an urgent need for various government interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for education. Based on review of the studies, it can be concluded that majority of scheduled castes are having low literacy status which in-turn causes for backwardness among people. In spite of affirmative action with various education programmes, the status of these, the status of these castes has not improved to the desired level. It was found that the scheduled tribe population stands far behind the general population in literacy rates, average years of schooling, retention rates and pass percentage.

### Recommendations

- Awareness campaigns should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of education.
- Financial assistance to students from scheduled castes (SC's) and scheduled tribes (ST's) community in order to keep pace with the other community students.
- Implementation of reservation in educational institutions.
- To improve the quality of education for all scheduled castes and scheduled tribes students and scholarship for meritorious students.
- Aware them through programmes and policies made for their upliftment.
- Develop the underprivileged learners and to develop their location so that the underprivileged learners can be easily exposed to the outside world in which they can gain experiences especially in learning language.
- Improving enrolment rates of these groups in schools and thus reduce school drop-out rates through special incentives/support services like hostels, financial assistance, scholarships, free books, uniforms etc and thus improve the educational status of these groups.
- Government should bear total cost of books for the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe families living below poverty line and for the students who are first generation learners of poor families.
- Special efforts for additional coaching, vocational training and other educational facilities to improve the standard of the students from backward community.
- To overcome the problems of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe education it may be suggested that the concerned authorities should take appropriate steps to provide proper facilities for effective participation education.

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